

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000871

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

ROME FOR FODAG
LONDON FOR POL/RIEDEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [EAGR](#) [PTER](#) [AORC](#) [ASEC](#) [PHUM](#) [NP](#) [WFP](#)

SUBJECT: LOOTING LEADS TO SUSPENSION OF WFP POVERTY
PROGRAM IN REMOTE DISTRICTS

REF: KATHMANDU 717

1. (SBU) Summary. A joint German-WFP food aid program has been suspended in two districts in western Nepal after rice supplies were stolen by suspected Maoist insurgents. A press release announcing the suspension was intended to put the Maoists on notice that food aid would be cut off if such incidents continued, its authors said. WFP has adopted a "zero tolerance" approach and will not resume deliveries until they are assured supply lines are safe and secure. End Summary.

Poverty Program On Hold After WFP Rice Stolen

2. (U) WFP and the German development organ GTZ suspended a poverty alleviation program in two remote districts of Nepal after rice supplies in those areas were looted, the two organizations revealed in a joint April 24 press release. On April 7, unknown individuals raided a warehouse serving the northwestern Mugu region, detained staff there, and made off with rice and cooking oil (Reftel). Then on April 9, bandits stole another 100 metric tons of rice from a storage facility in Jajarkot district. Authorities have not determined the identity of the robbers, but prime suspects include the Maoist insurgents.

Message to Maoists: Cut It Out

3. (SBU) The WFP Country Director for Nepal told us that the April 24 press release was an attempt to send the Maoists a message through the media: WFP and its implementing partners will suspend operations if they are unable to deliver food aid safely and effectively to where it is needed. Moreover, WFP does not want to appear to be negotiating with the Maoists. By shutting down, they put the ball in the Maoists' court, the Director added. [Note: Press reports commented that GTZ and WFP also sought to send a message to the government about the seriousness of the issue. End Note.] WFP said it hoped to inspire a more effective community response by raising awareness of the consequences of the criminal activities.

GTZ: Cancellation a "Warning Signal"

4. (SBU) The GTZ Director told Poloff that canceling the project in the two districts had only been done as a last resort. He agreed with his WFP counterpart that the intention of the press release had been to warn that the operation was jeopardized by such activity and to try to create public pressure on the Maoists. GTZ expressed a reservation, however, in that the conflict could already have reached a level that made it difficult to pressure the miscreants effectively. GTZ remained concerned about the deteriorating situation and the recent escalation of violence.

"Zero Tolerance" for Interference

5. (SBU) For the past year WFP has had a "zero tolerance" policy regarding interference in their operations, its director related. Last summer, five percent of the food stored by WFP in a facility in Dailekh district was confiscated by Maoists. WFP shut down the project, and only restarted it after they received compensation for the lost rations. They hope to get the Maoists' attention by shutting down in Mugu and Jajarkot, and insisting that safe and secure supply lines be guaranteed. In the past WFP had believed that the food was so valuable - and the areas so difficult to work in - that it was understood their supply lines would be respected.

Comment

6. (SBU) This incident underlines the negative effect the

Maoist insurgency has had on programs that benefit the poorest Nepalese. Approximately half of Nepalese children are already malnourished; without effective programs in place, a further deterioration of that and other human development indicators is a certainty. WFP and GTZ have decided to play hardball with the Maoists, betting that the Maoists would clear the way for food aid rather than watch their people starve. By their recent actions, however, the Maoists have shown little regard for the lives of Nepal's people.

MALINOWSKI